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Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
----------069746 281706Z /72
O 281503Z JUN 78 ZFF4
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO WHITE HOUSE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3869
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 8144

EXDIS DIST AS NODIS

FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, PEPR, IS
SUBJECT: ISRAEL ON THE EVE OF YOUR ARRIVAL

1. AS YOU DEPART WASHINGTON, THE MOOD OF ISRAEL IS DEFENSIVE AND CONFUSED. THE EMOTIONAL BINGE WHICH WAS TRIGGERED BY SADAT'S VISIT TO JERUSALEM HAS ENDED. THAT THRILL HAS GONE. IN ITS PLACE IS APPREHENSION, DISAPPOINTMENT AND FRACTIOUS INTERNAL DEBATE OVER SADAT'S MOTIVES AND TACTICS, THE ROLE OF THE U.S., AND ISRAEL'S RESPONSE TO THIS HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY. HAVING SPENT THIRTY YEARS DOMINATED BY A PSYCHOLOGY OF WAR, MOST ISRAELIS ARE NOW UNCERTAIN WHAT SACRIFICES, EACH POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS, THEY SHOULD MAKE FOR PEACE. ON THIS QUESTION MOST CRUCIAL TO ISRAEL AND OT OUR MIDDLE EAST PEACE EFFORTS, THERE IS NOWHERE NEAR A CRYSTALLIZED NATIONAL CONSENSUS. YOUR VISIT IS CLEARLY THE NEXT IMPORTANT STEP IN OUR EFFORTS TO ASSIST THOSE IN ISRAEL WHO ARGUE FOR FLEXIBILITY, TO DO WHAT WE CAN TO ENSURE THAT THE ISRAELI CONSENSUS, WHEN IT EVENTUALLY EMERGES, PROVIDES A PUSH TO THE PEACE PROCESS. IT WON'T BE EASY.
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2. YOU WILL FIND FAMILIAR MANY OF THE COMPLAINTS WHICH ISRAELIS HABITUALLY MAKE ON DOMESTIC MATTERS: INFLATION, NOW RUNNING CLOSE TO FORTY PERCENT A YEAR; A BUREAUCRACY WHICH IS AT THE SAME TIME PERVASIVE AND INEPT; AND A GOVERNMENT, LIKE ITS PREDECESSORS, WHICH DOES TOO LITTLE TO REDUCE THE INSIDIOUS EFFECTS OF ASHKENAZI-

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SEPHARDI DISPARITES. BUT DESPITE THESE FREQUENTLY VOICED CONCERNS, THE PRINCIPAL ITEM ON THE AGENDA IS PEACE.

3. IN RECENT WEEKS ATTENTION HAS, OF COURSE, BEEN RIVETED ON THE CABINET'S PREOCCUPATION WITH THE TWO QUESTIONS WE POSED. THE ANXIETY AND SUSPENSE FELT BY ISRAELIS DURING THE WEEKS THE QUESTIONS WERE DEBATED IN THE PRESS AND CABINET WERE NOT RELIEVED BY THE GOI'S ENIGMATIC RESPONSE ON JUNE 18. LIKE AMERICANS, ISRAELIS DO NOT STUDY GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENTS AS IF THEY WERE MORTAGE CONTRACTS. THE MAN ON THE STREET HERE COULD PROBABLY NOT EXPLAIN SPECIFICALLY WHAT THE STATEMENT SAID, AND DID NOT SAY, ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE WEST BANK. BUT HE WOULD KNOW THAT CAIRO DID NOT LIKE IT AND WASHINGTON "REGRETTED" IT. AND THE SIMILARITY OF THOSE TWO REACTIONS DEEPLY BOTHERS ISRAELIS AS A FEARFUL SYMBOL OF THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME.

4. INDEED, ISRAEL'S AMERICAN CONNECTION COMPETES WITH PEACE AS THE MAIN WORRY IN THIS COUNTRY. THE BITTER AFTERTASTE OF THE AIRCRAFT PACKAGE DEAL IS STILL PRESENT. IF THERE IS AN ISRAELI WHO BELIEVES WASHINGTON DID THE RIGHT THING ON THAT ISSUE, HE MUST BE WANDERING DEEP IN THE NEGEV BECAUSE NEITHER I NOR ANY OF MY COLLEAGUES IN THE EMBASSY HAVE RUN ACROSS HIM. ALL OUR ARGUMENTS CONFIDENTIAL

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ABOUT SUPPORTING MODERATE ARAB REGIMES GET WASHED AWAY BY TALK OF AMERICAN DEPENDENCE ON OIL FROM THE GULF, A DEPENDENCE ISRAELIS ACUTELY FEAR. THUS, AMERICAN PRESSURE ON ISRAEL COMES NOT IN THE FIRST INSTANCE FROM A GENUINE AND PRINCIPLED DESIRE TO PROMOTE LASTING PEACE IN THE AREA, BUT FROM POTENTIALLY EMPTY PUMPS AT THE CORNER GAS STATION. WHY ELSE, ISRAELIS ASK, WOULD AMERICA CONSTANTLY PRAISE SADAT, THE PEACEMAKER, WHEN HE CONTINUES TO CALL PUBLICLY FOR TOTAL ISRAELI WITH-DRAWAL FROM THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND A PALESTINAIN STATE, AND AT THE SAME TIME CONSTANTLY CRITICIZES ISRAEL FOR NOT DOING ENOUGH?

5. THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT ALL THE PUBLIC FINDS BEGIN BLAMELESS. MANY ISRELIS CONDEMN HIS RELIGIOUS-HISTORICAL DEDICATION TO GREATER ISRAEL AND THE CURRENT EFFECT OF THAT LIFE-LONG CONVICTION ON THE CONGRESS AND AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION. HOWEVER, THE ARGUMENT IS OFTEN THAT BEGIN HAS BADLY PACKAGED ISRAEL'S CLAIM TO THE WEST BANK AND PUT IT ON THE MARKET AT THE WRONG TIME. SECURITY SHOULD BE EMPHASIZED, STRESSES THE LABOR OPPOSITION, NOT GENESIS. ONLY A FEW SAY THAT ISRAEL SHOULD IN

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PRINCIPLE ACCEPT A RETURN TO THE 1967 BORDERS WITH "MINOR"
MODIFICATIONS. THUS MOST OF THE DISCUSSION IN
ISRAEL AT THE MOMENT, THOUGH SOMETIMES SHRILL, IS NOT
ON THE ESSENCE OF THE PEACE PROCESS--HOW MUCH LAND FOR
HOW MUCH PEACE--BUT RATHER ABOUT A MORE ARTFUL PRESENTATION
OF ISREAL'S SECURITY INTERESTS IN THE OCCUPIED
TERRITORIES.

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ACTION NODS-00

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO WHITE HOUSE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3870
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TEL AVIV 8144

EXDIS DIST AS NODIS

FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT FROM THE AMBASSADOR

6. INEXTRICABLY INTERWOVEN WITH THIS TACTICAL ARGUMENT
IS A POLITICAL STRUGGLE FOR POWER. BEGIN'S HEALTH IS
DETERIORATING AND THE VULTURES ARE BEGINNING TO CIRCLE,
THOUGH STILL VERY HIGH UP. HE HAS RECENTLY SEEMED A
DIFFERENT MAN FROM THE ONE YOU SAW IN WASHINGTON IN EARLY
MAY, SO PHYSICALLY WEAK HE HAS BEEN AVOIDING MANY PUBLIC
OCCASIONS, SO SICK LOOKING HIS AIDES HAVE BEEN TRYING
TO KEEP HIM FAR FROM THE TV CAMERAS. YET SINCE JUNE 25
HE HAS VISIBLY BOUNCED BACK. WHEN I MET WITH HIM TODAY
(JUNE 28) HE LOOKED AND ACTED QUITE NORMAL AND HE WELCOMED
THE CAMERAS INTO THE ROOM. WHATEVER HIS TRUE
HEALTH, HIS CONTROL OF THE GOVERNMENT REMAINS FIRM, AND
HIS STANDING IN PUBLIC OPINION--SEVENTY EIGHT PERCENT
ARE AT LEAST "MORE OR LESS SATISFIED" ACCORDING TO THE
LAST POLL--IS STILL STRONG. DESPITE THE WIDELY PUBLICIZED
RUMORS OF A CABINET CRISIS OVER THE U.S. QUESTIONS,
BEGIN'S APPROACH CARRIED THE DAY. HIS VICTORY WAS NOT
COMPLETE (WEIZMAN AND THE DMC MINISTERS OPPOSED HIM TO

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THE END), NOR WAS IT WITHOUT COST (THE IMAGE OF A UNITED
CABINET SUPPORTING ITS PM WAS SHATTERED), BUT THE FINAL
OUTCOME WAS NONETHELESS A REMINDER THAT BEGIN STILL SITS
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IN THE CATBIRD SEAT. DISAGREEMENTS WITH HIS POLICY FROM
WITHIN AND WITHOUT ISRAEL DO NOT YET THREATEN THAT PERCH,
BECAUSE, IN THE ABSENCE OF PERCEIVED EGYPTIAN FLEXIBILITY,
MOST ISRAELIS DO NOT BELIEVE BEGIN AND HIS POLICIES ARE
THE MOST IMPORTANT ROADBLOCK TO PEACE.

7. ON ONE LEVEL YOUR VISIT WILL BE WARMLY WELCOMED AS
A HOMAGE TO ISRAEL'S THIRTY YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE
BY A LONG-TIME FRIEND. VISITS BY FOREIGN LEADERS,
ESPECIALLY AMERICAN VICE PRESIDENTS, ARE NOT COMMON
CCURRENCES IN THIS COUNTRY. A PUBLIC ALMOST RESIGNED
TO ISRAEL'S INTERNATIONAL PARIAH STATUS WILL VIEW YOUR
ARRIVAL AS A MAJOR AND POSITIVE EXPRESSION OF THE TIES
THAT BIND ISRAEL TO ITS ONLY MAJOR ALLY, ESPECIALLY IF THE CRISIS
OVER YOUR VISIT TO THE WESTERN WALL CAN BE CONTAINED. HOWEVER, THE
PRESS AND POLITICIANS HAVE ALSO CONNECTED YOUR VISIT TO
ADMINISTRATION WORRIES ABOUT THIS YEAR'S CONGRESSIONAL
ELECTIONS AND AS WELL AS THE NEED TO SOFTEN UP ISRAELI
OPINION FOR THE PROBABLE PRESENTATION BY WASHINGTON OF
A U.S. PEACE PLAN IN THE NEAR FUTURE. FURTHER, THERE IS
CONCERN THAT YOU WILL BE PRESENTING, AT BEST, MORE
DIFFICULT QUESTIONS AND, AT WORST, STERN REMONSTRATIONS.
THOSE MOST SUSPICIOUS OF U.S. INTENTIONS WILL ALSO SEE
YOUR MISSION AS AN EFFORT TO FURTHER WEAKEN THE BEGIN
GOVERNMENT AND SOFTEN UP ISRAEL FOR UNILATERAL CONCESSIONS.
IN ANY EVENT, ALL ISRAELIS WILL BE INCESSANTLY
ALERT TO INDICATIONS THAT YOUR BAGGAGE CONTAINS SOME
FORM OF AMERICAN PRESSURE, PRESSURE ALMOST EVERYONE IN
THIS COUNTRY OF WHATEVER POLITICAL STRIPE BELIEVES MUST
BE AUTOMATICALLY RESISTED. AT THE SAME TIME, ISRAELIS,
LIKE LOVERS FEARING THEIR RELATIONSHIP IS
TURNING SOUR, WILL BE SEEKING REASSURANCE THROUGH YOU
THAT AMERICA STILL CARES AS MUCH AS IT EVER DID, THAT
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U.S. SUPPORT FOR AND COMMITMENT TO ISRAEL TRANSCENDS
OUR PRESENT DIFFERENCES IN APPROACH TO THE PEACE PROCESS.
AND, FINALLY, BEGIN, AS IN HIS VISITS TO THE UNITED
STATES, WILL TRY IN THE FOUR DAYS TO TURN YOUR GENERALIZED
EXPRESSION OF U.S. SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL INTO SPECIFIC
POLITICAL CAPITAL FOR HIMSELF HERE AND IN THE UNITED

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STATES.

8. WELCOME TO ANOTHER TIGHTROPE.
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Draft Date: 28 jun 1978
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Status: NATIVE
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TAGS: PGOV, PINT, PEPR, IS, US, (MONDALE, WALTER F)
To: STATE WHITE HOUSE MULTIPLE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/9b05077c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
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